IRis

Northeastern University

Institute on Race and Justice Publications

Institute on Race and Justice

July 01, 2008

Street outreach workers: best practices and lessons learned: innovative practices from the Charles E. Shannon Jr. Community Safety Initiative Series

Scott H. Decker
Arizona State University

Tim S. Bynum
Michigan State University

Jack McDevitt
Northeastern University

Amy Farrell
Northeastern University

Sean Varano
Northeastern University

Recommended Citation

Decker, Scott H.; Bynum, Tim S.; McDevitt, Jack; Farrell, Amy; and Varano, Sean, "Street outreach workers: best practices and lessons learned: innovative practices from the Charles E. Shannon Jr. Community Safety Initiative Series" (2008). *Institute on Race and Justice Publications.* Paper 17. http://hdl.handle.net/2047/d20002519

This work is available open access, hosted by Northeastern University.

Street Outreach Workers: Best Practices and Lessons Learned

Innovative Practices from the Charles E. Shannon Jr. Community Safety Initiative Series

July, 2008

Northeastern University
Institute on Race and Justice

Authors:

Scott H. Decker
School of Criminology and Criminal Justice
Arizona State University

Tim S. Bynum
School of Criminal Justice
Michigan State University

Jack McDevitt
Amy Farrell
and
Sean Varano
College of Criminal Justice
Northeastern University

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security including Undersecretary for Law Enforcement and Fire Services, Kurt Schwartz; Executive Director of the Office of Grants and Research, Sandra McCroom; Director of Research and Policy Analysis, Keith O'Brien; and Research Analyst, James Stark for their thoughtful feedback and guidance on development of the resource guide. The research team would also like to thank Russell Wolff, Lisa Laguerre and Julie French for their assistance with the production of the guide. We are extremely grateful to Michele Streitmater of the Brockton Police Department and the staff from MyTurn, Jennifer Ball from the Lowell Police Department and Juan Carlos Rivera from United Teen Equality (UTEC), and Drae Perkins and Michele Roderick and the street work team from New Bedford for providing detailed information about street work programs in their communities.

This project was supported by Grant #2005-DB-BX-0014, awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, through the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS) Office of Grants and Research. Points of view in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represented the official position of the U.S. Department of Justice and EOPSS.

Introduction

Street outreach workers are an important part of the Senator Charles E. Shannon Jr. Community Safety Initiative (CSI) comprehensive gang and youth violence reduction strategy in Massachusetts[1]. Street outreach involves the use of individuals to "work the streets," making contact with youth in neighborhoods with high levels of gang activity. These individuals are generally not employed by the criminal justice system agencies but rather are based in community service organizations or other non- governmental agencies. Street outreach workers provide an important bridge between the community, gang-involved youth, and the agencies (whether social service or law enforcement) that respond to the problems of delinquency and gangs.

This guide offers information, guidance, and lessons learned from street outreach programs nationally and within the Massachusetts Shannon CSI communities to help guide existing street outreach programs and support communities considering developing new street outreach programs. The guide provides the following information:

- History of street outreach worker programs in the United States
- Functions and characteristics of street outreach worker programs
- Street outreach programs in Massachusetts
- Challenges of street outreach worker programs and recommendations for success

Methodology for Report

Through the Shannon CSI quarterly technical assistance meetings and follow-up conversations with Shannon CSI community partners, street outreach was identified by Northeastern University's Institute on Race and Justice[2] (NU) and the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS) as a program element on which communities

[1] The Senator Charles E. Shannon Community Safety Initiative encourages Shannon grantees to use the Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Comprehensive Gang Model. The model includes five components, Suppression, Social Intervention, Opportunities Provision, Community Mobilization, and Organizational Change and Development. For more information the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model, please visit http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org/. For more information on the Senator Charles E. Shannon Community Safety Initiative, please visit http://www.shannoncsi.neu.edu/.
[2] Northeastern University's Institute on Race and Justice serves as the Statewide Youth Violence Research Partner to the EOPSS and the Shannon CSI sites as part of the Shannon CSI.

would like further information. In an effort to respond to this need, NU and EOPSS decided to develop a guide on street outreach for Shannon CSI communities. To accomplish this task NU conducted site-visits and interviews with street workers in Boston, Brockton, Lowell and New Bedford, reviewed available research literature on street outreach, designed and disseminated a survey (see appendix A), with EOPSS, to all 39 Shannon CSI communities, and consulted two national experts on gangs, Dr. Scott Decker of Arizona State University and Dr. Tim Bynum of Michigan State University to provide a national and historical perspective on the use of street outreach workers to control gang and youth violence.

History of Street Outreach Worker Programs in the United States

During the past fifty years the street outreach worker approach has been used in a variety of communities to address social problems such as homeless youth, disease prevention, drug use and violence (Gleghorn et al., 2004; OJJDP, 2002, Fosburg and Dennis, 1999). Below we highlight early street outreach approaches aimed to reducing gang violence in Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia.

Boston

The Midcity Project operated in Boston in the mid-1950's and remains a well known model of street outreach. The project was directed by Walter Miller and focused on community, family, and gang. The street outreach work with the gang was the key component of the program. Seven workers were assigned to a defined area to establish relationships with gangs and try and change the members of these gangs. Each worker received professional training and had the resources to refer individuals to psychological treatment. The program was successful in establishing contact and maintaining interactions with gang members over a sustained period of time. In this respect the project was a success. However, there were no recorded declines in illegal or morally disapproved behavior among the gang members targeted for intervention (Bibb, 1967).

Chicago

The Chicago Youth Development Project (CYDP) operated in the early 1960s. It had substantial levels of support from the Ford Foundation and worked through the Chicago Boys and Girls Clubs. The major focus of the project was the use of street workers, though community organizations were also included in the intervention. Both gang and non-gang youths were included, and a unique part of this intervention was the careful monitoring of the street workers and their reporting requirements by program staff. This was done through regular meetings with all the street workers. As in Boston, the evaluation showed no change in levels of delinquency. Some participants increased

their educational goals, but the well-coordinated and managed street outreach work in CYDP did not lead to declines in delinquency among members of the target groups (Mattick and Kaplan, 1967).

Los Angeles
The Group Guidance Project (GGP) operated in Los Angeles in the early 1960s. It was based on the Boston and Chicago projects with considerable attention paid to the issue of group cohesion. Here, street workers operating out of the Los Angeles County Probation Department worked with 800 members of four gangs. Their goal was to focus specifically on reducing gang violence. Similar to the results in Chicago and Boston, no reduction in levels of delinquency was observed among gang members with sustained contact with street outreach workers. Cohesion among gang members increased in direct proportion to the attention paid to the gang by street workers, and delinquency increased in conjunction with cohesiveness. These conclusions led to a reformulated program in which group programming was decreased and individual programming was increased. Gang cohesion and gang size both declined in this intervention, although the number offenses committed by individual gang members did not. However, overall offenses committed by gang members did decline because the size of gangs was reduced (Klein, 1971).

Philadelphia
Philadelphia's Crisis Intervention Network (CIN) operated from the mid-1970s until the late 1980s. The primary focus of this program was on community- or neighborhood-level violence and included a strong grassroots community organization, House of Umoja. CIN had both a street outreach worker component and a probation/parole unit that worked with a coalition of neighborhood-level community organizations. In this sense, it merged suppression with street outreach work. The House of Umoja implemented gang summits and truces in an attempt to reduce street violence. The CIN umbrella also extended to parents' groups and other grassroots organizations. Declines in gang-related homicides for Philadelphia were recorded during the operation of the program (Needle and Stapleton, 1983).

Each of these programs came to an end either because grants were completed, leadership left, or the problems of gangs were dwarfed by other urban problems. These examples illustrate the critical yet extremely challenging role that street outreach can play in addressing gang problems.

More recently, in the mid 1990s, street outreach workers were a key element of the successful Boston anti-gang violence model (Kennedy, 1997). In this program, street outreach workers helped to send the message to youth that gun violence would not be tolerated in Boston and helped to refer youth to various neighborhood-level service programs for educational support, substance abuse services, or vocational services. It is important to note that in this effort street outreach workers were a

component of a much larger strategy that included the police and community groups and included increased monitoring of gang members and increased communications with these youth. Together, this collaboration was responsible for a two-and-a-half year period where no youth was killed in the City of Boston (Braga et al., 2001).

Despite their promise as a gang violence reduction strategy, street outreach programs are challenging to develop, implement and sustain. Prior experiences suggest street outreach programs are most successful when integrated into a comprehensive anti-gang violence approach as is the case in the Shannon CSI (OJJDP, 2002). There are a number of important characteristics of successful street outreach program that should be recognized by communities looking to develop or expand their street outreach programs.

Functions and Characteristics of Street Outreach Worker Programs

Street outreach worker programs serve two major functions:

1. Link at risk youth to services and pro-social activities
2. Engage in activities with youth to learn about and disrupt violence.

Street outreach worker interventions are designed to engage high-risk youth in pro-social activities, insure that these youth gain access to social services, and forge connections between youth who are at-risk and service providers in the employment, education, and social service sectors. In some communities, outreach workers work in cooperation with community programs and groups including settlement houses, refugee or immigrant groups, schools, or public health agencies. A second function of street outreach workers is to engage in activities that enable them to learn about, anticipate, and disrupt violence. The director of the Chicago CeaseFire project, Dr. Gary Slutkin calls the project's outreach workers "violence interrupters." This refers to the complex and sometimes dangerous role street outreach workers play in attempting to disrupt disputes before they escalate.

To accomplish these functions outreach programs must develop and maintain credibility with youth and with law enforcement. The challenges associated with developing and maintaining credibility with these groups are discussed in more detail below.

Credibility with Youth

Street outreach workers must have credibility with the youth in the community or they will never obtain the trust and respect necessary for successful outreach interventions (OJJDP 2007). While a street worker's credibility is their most effective tool, it is also one of the most difficult to achieve and maintain. To gain credibility with youth, street outreach programs often employ workers who represent the population they are trying to reach and persons that can relate to the experiences of high risk youth. Such workers often grew up in the neighborhoods that are affected by violence, are comfortable working in high risk communities and in many cases have previous experience with or involvement in gangs. Some of the most successful street outreach workers have been those with personal involvement in gangs themselves (OJJDP, 2007).

To maintain credibility with youth, street outreach workers must follow through on commitments they make to youth. The youth that street outreach worker target often face long histories of neglect and abandonment by adults in their lives. Street workers must ensure that they do not make promises or set expectations with youth that they cannot keep. Additionally, street workers must balance the trust youth place in them to keep information confidential and the necessity of informing police and other government officials if there is the potential for violence or harm. This can be a very difficult task. In many instances street outreach workers may learn about threats or the potential for violence among gang members of which the police need to be informed. When the potential to prevent serious violence presents itself, street outreach workers must transit transmit this sensitive information in a way that both protects the confidentiality and trust they have with youth while at the same time alerts the appropriate officials who can help keep youth safe.

Credibility with Law Enforcement and Other Agencies

Street outreach workers must also develop and maintain credibility with local law enforcement and other governmental officials. To do this, street worker often have to overcome negative relationships or perceptions that exist between street workers and

the police. This relationship is made more difficult if the street outreach workers were former gang members. Police officers initially may not be willing or may be hesitant to trust street workers who they previously knew to be gang involved. There is a natural tendency for many police officers to shun these individuals, which can disrupt entire programs (OJJDP, 2007). Additionally, because street workers develop trusting relationships with youth they sometimes learn about criminal incidents before the police do, which can frustrate law enforcement officials. However, keeping this information confidential sometimes the only way street outreach workers can maintain their credibility among the youth they see on a daily basis. This is perhaps the most difficult aspect of a street outreach worker's role.

Distrust between street workers and the police can also be directed at police. Street workers sometimes can be skeptical of the motivations of police officials. Some street workers may think that law enforcement will try to use them as a sort of rogue agent to infiltrate existing gangs and gain information. In other instances, street workers have negative previous experiences with particular police officers that decrease their willingness to share information or work collaboratively with the police. In all cases, the relationship between the police and the street workers is an important and challenging part of any street outreach worker program.

Street Outreach Programs in Massachusetts

Many communities in Massachusetts have developed or expanded street outreach worker programs with Shannon CSI funding. A recent survey of Shannon CSI communities provided details about the characteristics of outreach programs across those communities (See Appendix A for survey and results). Results of the survey indicates that street outreach programs are currently operating in 12 (39%) of the 31 Shannon CSI communities that responded to the survey. Of the 12 communities with street outreach workers, 8 or 67% began their program as part of the Shannon CSI program. An additional 12 communities (39%) are planning to develop a street outreach program.

The majority of street outreach programs are relatively small. Half of the Shannon communities with street outreach workers have 2 or fewer Shannon funded

workers in their program. About half of the programs (42%) employ full time street outreach workers and most street outreach workers work from the afternoon into the evening.

The survey also reveals some other interesting information about the recruitment and background of Massachusetts street outreach workers. Street outreach workers in Massachusetts are generally young. Half (50%) of the programs surveyed employ street outreach workers that are all under 30 years of age. Seventy five percent of the programs indicated they hired workers with prior street outreach experience, but less than half (42%) had any clinically trained workers. Many street outreach workers in Massachusetts also have experience with the criminal justice system. While only one of the twelve Massachusetts street outreach programs has workers that are former gang members, a majority of communities with street outreach programs have employees who have been arrested and have criminal records.

In addition to surveying Shannon CSI communities to find out general information about their street worker programs, we conducted interviews with street workers and their managers to learn more about the programs. We found a number of different types of street worker programs that have been developed to meet the needs of Shannon CSI communities. The programs have different structures and in some cases have different goals for the outreach to youth. The three general models presented below describe different types of street outreach programs that have emerged during the first two years of Shannon CSI programming. It is important to note that these are general descriptions of program models and some Shannon CSI programs have characteristics that cross the three models.

Model 1: Clinical Model

Goal: Provide one-on-one intervention services between clinical social workers and youth at risk of gangs and violence.

Examples: Youth Services Providers Network in Boston.

Structure of street worker program: Youth Services Providers Network of Boston works in partnership with the Boston Police Department and the Boys and Girls Club of Boston. The program was designed to provide police with options when they encounter youth that are involved in gangs or other risky behavior that could benefit from intervention as opposed to arrest. YSPN places licensed clinical social workers in five of the city police districts and receives clients citywide. YSPN social workers receive referrals from the police and others involved in the Shannon CSI partnership about youth in need of services. In fact, the primary referral source for YSPN are the patrol officers of the Boson Police Department. The social workers, in turn, provide some non-confidential information about a youth's progress back to the referring patrol officers.

Activities: Social workers reach out to youth identified by the police or other agencies and organizations and offer referrals appropriate to these youth. They provide a range of services such as crisis intervention, trauma services, youth risk assessment, or service programming interventions intended to decrease risky behavior.

Model 2: Program-Based Model

Goal: Provide outreach to youth on the street in hopes of getting them to join programs where they will receive counseling, opportunity provision through education and job training, and referrals to needed services.

Examples: My Turn Street Outreach in Brockton

Structure of street worker program: Agency-based street workers are generally full-time employees of a youth service agency. They work with a team of other agency employees who are responsible for providing case management, direct services, and referrals to young persons identified by the street workers.

Activities: An outreach worker's role is to develop relationships with youth and encourage them to join programs where they will receive the attention and assistance that they need. Agency-based street workers sometimes have administrative responsibilities within the agency, but their main function is to go into the community and meet youth who are in need of the agency services or programs but may be unaware of these programs or reluctant to receive such services. In some large cities, the Boys and Girls Clubs of America have instituted outreach programs to make contact with gang members in an attempt to integrate gang-involved youth into Club activities.

Model 3: Street-Based Intervention Model

Goal: Mediate conflicts between youth on the street to reduce violence and bring peace. Contacts with youth also result in referrals to youth service programs or a centralized agency.

Examples: H.O.P.E. Collaborative Street Workers, New Bedford; United Teen Equality Center (UTEC) Street Workers, Lowell; Street Workers Program, Boston.

Structure of street worker program: Street-based intervention programs are often administered by a youth service agency but the day-to-day activities of the street workers are often not closely connected to the agency's work. For example, in New Bedford the executive director of the YMCA and the director of Treatment on Demand work together to oversee the activities of five street workers who are employed by the YMCA. In Lowell, the street workers are employed by UTEC. There is a full-time street worker director who oversees the street outreach work, provides assistance to the outreach workers, handles the program administration, and plans new program activities. In addition to the director, UTEC employs four full time street workers who do program referral and develop street level intelligence about potential violence.

Street workers can be recruited from a variety of sources. Some of the street workers in Lowell are former gang members who left gang activities as a result of street worker programs and became part of the city's Peace Council, a group devoted to supporting peace in Lowell. After working as a volunteer for the Peace Council some individuals have been invited to work full time as street workers. UTEC also has a junior street workers program. The junior street workers mainly help connect the youth on the street to street workers and promote programs at UTEC among youth. Junior street workers can apply to become street workers at age 21. Junior street workers do not engage in case management or mediation on the street.

Activities: In New Bedford, street workers have structured intervention time at area schools. They will "hang out" with kids during lunch time and talk with kids about issues of violence at the school and in the community. In the winter, street workers spend time at the Dartmouth Mall on weekends meeting and talking with youth. In Lowell, the Police Department and the Shannon community partners work with the street workers to identify the gangs in the city that are the most at risk for violence. The street workers then make contact with youth involved with these gangs and work to develop relationships with members of rival gang sets. Through these relationships the street workers help resolve conflicts between rivaling gang members.

Each of the model's strengths and weaknesses are described in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Strengths and Weakness of Three Models of Street Outreach Programs

Model	Strengths	Weaknesses
Clinical	Provides professional individual level assessment and counseling services to youth. Monitors the progress of a small number of high risk youth on a more consistent basis because of the ongoing contact between individual youth and social worker.	Costs exceed alternative models due to employed licensed clinical social workers. May be a little less flexible to respond to street level events on a real time basis due to professional certification and structural characteristics.
Program-Based	Contacts a large number of youth and can serve as a program referral source for these youth. Relatively flexible to be deployed to neighborhoods which are experiencing gang violence.	Relies on youth's agreement to attend the programs recommended. Street outreach workers generally have little ability to monitor the progress of youth. Concerns about mixing gang and non-gang youth in the same activities, increasing gang cohesion, and insuring that gang workers do not over-identify with gang members. Agency policies or regulations sometimes limit the ability of street outreach workers to serve the most at risk youth.
Street-Based Intervention	Understand community dynamics and have credibility with large numbers of neighborhood youth. Extremely flexible and among the least expensive.	Lack of training and supervision can occasionally put the street worker or some youth they are involved with at risk for violence or retaliation from other gang involved youth.

Challenges of Street Outreach Worker Programs and Recommendations for Success

Developing and maintaining successful street outreach programs can be challenging. Despite these challenges a number of successful street outreach interventions have occurred in Shannon CSI communities over the past two years. Below we provide a series of recommendation for successful street outreach programs that are based on literature about street outreach programs nationally and the experiences of Shannon CSI communities with street outreach programs.

1. Maintaining Boundaries

Street outreach must maintain boundaries with the youth they serve. There are numerous examples of intervention programs where the workers "went native" and came to more closely identify with their clients and abandoned their role as a street outreach worker. This is known to occur at times in substance abuse programs, poverty work, and prisoner

advocacy (Broadhead and Heckathorn, 1994). This challenge is exacerbated in street outreach programs because successful street outreach workers often have experience with gangs and individuals involved in gangs in their local community. Leaving the gang is a process that occurs over a period of time, with many plateaus and transitions before all ties to the gang have been cut. For this reason, it is often difficult to know when an individual has completely left the gang.

Recommendations:

- **Recruitment**. A key element of a successful program is the careful selection of the individuals who are asked to perform these difficult tasks. It is essential to determine that youth with prior criminal or gang involvement have actually renounced their prior activity and are in fact now role models for youth. In some communities law enforcement is involved in the process of vetting potential street workers during the hiring process.
- **Training.** The provision of appropriate training initially and reinforced periodically is also an essential part of any successful street outreach program. Additionally regular and consistent supervision reinforces the training the worker has received as well as the goals of the program. Outreach workers cannot simply be placed in a City's neighborhoods and expected to perform their jobs without regular supervision and in-service training.
- **Establish Early on that Information Sharing is Unidirectional**. Street outreach workers will be unable to share the information they possess with their police partners – period. In contrast, law enforcement officials should share information with outreach workers when appropriate. For example, officers may identify hot spots for outreach worker efforts or even suspected gang-involved youth whom workers might attempt to contact. While information "sharing" often lies at the heart of most partnerships, there are real and tangible risks for outreach workers. First, it threatens the trust they have developed which could limit their future ability to engage with their intended target population. Second, inappropriate information sharing could cause direct harm to them or their clients. Engaging in a dialogue with the police about this difficult balancing act and developing protocols for how and when information will be shared is an important first step in the process.

2. Leadership and Focus of Street Outreach Programs

Street outreach programs by their nature often lack a common focus or definition to the outreach workers interventions. In many cases, well-intentioned efforts may lack clear outcome goals, and it can be hard to tell if such programs were successful at changing individual behavior, values, group associations, or involvement in crime. In addition, it is often difficult to tell the extent to which gangs are the real focus of such strategies.

Peace Summit Example – UTEC, Lowell

In Lowell, street workers begin by talking with youth to identify the type of activity that most interests them. The street workers then offer host an event that relates to their interest. For example, they might organize a basketball game with one group of kids. During the game they will develop relationships and try to identify youth that are open to receiving services and might be amenable to resolving conflicts with rival gang members.

Once the street workers identify and begin working with a group of youth from a gang set they invite 20 young people from the gang to come together for a "peace circle" which includes ice breaking and relationship building activities. They try to identify common values among the teens and help build trust. By the end of the workshop they try to find out what kinds of activities the kids in the group could commit to. If some of the teens are willing to work with gang members from a rival set, the outreach workers will identify a small group of youth who would be willing to organize a peace summit with five representatives from each rival set.

At the peace summits youth from rival groups go away together on an outing. The youth work together on activities such as camping or kayaking to help the youth see each other as individuals and develop relationships outside of the gangs. At end of the summit the group holds a fire ceremony to identify all the things the group can agree to once they return to Lowell.

Recommendations:

- **Leadership**. While street workers often operate in a decentralized fashion, making contact with youth across a city, they should report back to centralized leadership. Street outreach workers must be given clear and explicit goals and held accountable for achieving those goals, whether those include a number of contacts, referrals, or reports. Program leaders should develop plans and general goals for the street workers, provide feedback to street workers about their progress toward goals, and help trouble shoot problems. Some Shannon communities have found post incident reviews to be very helpful. These reviews, which take place after a violent incident or other important incident, provide an opportunity for the street workers to review with their supervisors what happened at the incident and determine if there are things that should be done better to prevent future incidents.
- **Defined Program Activities.** Some communities have found it helpful to design general intervention activities or intervention plans that street workers follow to achieve program goals. These plans must be flexible to change to the needs of particular groups of youth, but have some general parameters that guide street outreach interventions. One example of a focused program with a series of specific steps and goals is the peace summit program utilized in Lowell. A description of the meetings between members of rival gangs, called "peace summits," is described below.

3. Demands of Street Worker Role and Retention of Street Worker Staff

Street worker program often struggle to retain good employees who help sustain programs. These programs are inherently difficult. To be successful, street workers programs must have flexible working hours. This often means that street workers will be called in to work at different times of the day, often in the evening and on weekends. Over a long period of time such a flexible work schedule can be difficult for employees who have families or other demands on their time. Street workers often must negotiate difficult relationships with at risk youth, many of whom may need more time and attention than street workers have to offer. In some cases street workers become invested in a youth who falls back into crime or is a victim of violence. Street workers are also exposed to regular trauma and violence in the communities that they are serving. The emotional strain and frustration of these situations can cause good street workers to burn out.

Recommendations:

- **Communication**. Ongoing communication is essential not only between street workers and the police and street workers and youth but also among the street workers themselves. Street workers deal with trauma and stress as a regular part of their job. It is important that time be set aside for street workers to talk with each other and program leaders about the situations they have encountered as a means of professional development and emotional support. In some cases it is important for street workers to have the ability to meet with outside clinicians to process the emotional issues that they face as a regular part of their job.
- **Career Paths.** Most street workers will only remain in this position for a few years. It is important that programs develop a career path that allows those currently involved in street outreach have other career options should they decide to move on.

4. Sustaining Street Outreach Programs over Time

Street outreach programs are often focused on the day-to-day needs and demands of at risk youth and can lose sight of the need ensure institutional support for the program. There are a number of challenges to sustaining these programs over time. First, it is difficult to collect reliable data on program treatment and outcomes in order to evaluate the success of street outreach programs. Many programs have multiple anecdotes of successful individuals but few

have been able to collect the type of systematic data on individuals with whom they work that would allow for a successful evaluation of the program. Second, street outreach programs often lose the attention and resources from city and state leaders when youth violence is reduced or other priorities emerge.

Recommendations:

- **Data Collection and Evaluation**. While street outreach programs and their leaders may be resistant to systematic and regular data collection and evaluation such information can be critical to street outreach programs' continued funding. Local Action Research Partners working with Shannon CSI communities can help document the services received and progress made by youth involved with street outreach workers.
- **Regular Reassessment of Problems.** Communities with street outreach programs need to regularly reassess the dynamics of gang violence in their communities. The dynamics of gang violence change frequently with different groups in conflict and new groups emerging. With their ongoing street intelligence, supervisors should regularly review their street outreach plan (and other gang violence reduction efforts) and be ready to shift focus to those areas experiencing the most extreme gang violence. This allows street outreach programs to respond to changing needs in a community which might threaten to divert their programs funding or support.
- **Law Enforcement Executives as Champions**. In order to facilitate the relationship between street workers and the police it is imperative that the legitimacy of outreach workers be established as soon as possible. This is best accomplished by law enforcement executives serving as champions for these efforts. This might include a police chief who introduces outreach workers during roll calls, community meetings and to other governmental or private organizations (e.g., hospital executives or school personnel). It is important to articulate that these individuals are legitimate and valued as "part of the team.

5. Avoiding Unintended Consequences

Finally, it is important for street outreach programs to ensure they do less harm than good. Researchers often talk about the unintended effects of a particular action. Gang intervention efforts are especially prone to such concerns. Gang interventions in Los Angeles actually provided gangs with two commodities that they often fail to achieve on their own: recognition and resources (Klein, 1971). By affiliating outreach workers or programs with a

specific gang or well-defined neighborhood, the status of the gang may be increased in the neighborhood, making it more attractive to neighborhood youth. News that a gang has become the object of official focus often enhances its status among marginal or non-gang youth in the neighborhood. These unintended consequences threaten to undermine the legitimacy of street workers with both the community and the police.

Recommendations:

- **Communication**. Additionally some programs have developed internal policies for dealing with the media or other outside organizations which threaten the credibility of the street worker relationships. It often occurs that local reporters will try to obtain information from street workers about incidents that have occurred. Additionally, if a street worker relapses into crime the media is often quick to criticize. Organizational policies and prior conversations will provide clear direction regarding what information (if any) will be shared with the media and how to deal with inquiries about individual street workers, potentially defusing damaging situations.
- **Understand Problems are Likely to Happen**. All parties need to understand that within the police/ street outreach worker relationship it is almost certain problems will develop. A patrol officer might speak inappropriately to an outreach worker at a crime scene or an outreach worker might eventually fall back into the life and "catch a case." Police personnel and outreach workers need to develop resistance to these and other *real* threats to the long term success of these efforts. Problems will develop in all likelihood. Success will be determined by how the problems are handled.

References

Braga, A., D. Kennedy, E. Waring, A.M. Piehl. 2001. Problem Oriented Policing, Deterrence, and Youth Violence: An Evaluation of Boston's Operation Ceasefire. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency.* 38: 195-225.

Bibb, M. 1967. Gang Related Services of Mobilization for Youth, pg. 175-182 in *Juvenile Gangs in Context: Theory, Research and Action*, edited by M. Klein. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Braga, A, D. Kennedy, E. Waring E. Piehl. 2001. Problem Orientated Policing Deterrence and Youth Violence: An Evaluation of Boston's Operation Ceasefire. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 8: 195-225.

Broadhead, R. and D. Heckathorn. 1994. AIDS Prevention Outreach among Injection Drug Users: Agency Problems and New Approaches. *Social Problems*, 41: 473-495.

Fosburg, L. and D. Dennis. 1999. *Practical Lessons: The 1998 National Symposium on Homeless Research*. Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Gleghorn, A., D. Clements, R. Marx, E. Vittinghoff, P. Lee-Chu, and M. Katz. 2004. The Impact of Intensive Outreach on HIV Prevention Activities of Homeless, Runaway and Street Youth in San Francisco: The AIDS Evaluation of Street Outreach Project. *AIDS and Behavior*, 1: 261-271.

Kennedy, D. 1997. Juvenile Gun Violence and Gun Markets in Boston. *National Institute of Justice Research Preview*. Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice.

Klein, M. 1971. *Street Gangs and Street Workers.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Mattick, H. and N.S. Caplan. 1967. Stake Animals, Loud-talking and Leadership in Do-Nothing and Do-something Situations, pg. 106-120 in *Juvenile Gangs in Context: Theory, Research and Action*, edited by M.W. Klein and B.G. Myerhoff. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Needle, J.A. and W.V. Stapleton. 1983. *Police Handling of Youth Gangs*. U.S. Department of Justice. http://www.ncjrs.gov/App/Publications/abstract.aspx?ID=88927.

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. 2002. *OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model: Planning for Implementation*. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Washington D.C.

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. 2007. *Best Practices to Address Gang Problems: OJJDP's Comprehensive Gang Model* Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Washington D.C.

Appendix A

STREET OUTREACH SURVEY RESULTS

Street Outreach Survey, Total Respondents N=31

Q1	**Does your Shannon collaborative have a street outreach component?**	12 sites (38.7%) have a street outreach component
Q2	**Is this street outreach program a new initiative begun as part of Shannon CSI?**	8 sites' programs (66.7%) began as part of Shannon
Q3	**In what year did the street outreach program begin?**	Of Shannon-initiated programs (N=8): 5 (62.5%) began in 2006 2 (25.0%) began in 2007 1 (12.5%) began in "year 1" Of non-Shannon-initiated sites (N=4): 1 (25.0%) began in 1988 1 (25.0%) began in 1999 2 (50.0%) began in 2005
Q4	**What is the total number of street outreach workers who are part of your Shannon collaborative?**	Half (50.0%) have 2 or fewer 3 sites (25.0%) have 1 3 sites (25.0%) have 2 1 site (8.3%) has 3 1 site (8.3%) has 5 1 site (8.3%) has 6 1 site (8.3%) has 7 1 site (8.3%) has 25 1 site (8.3%) has 34
Q5	**How many street outreach workers are of the ages grouped below?**	5 sites (41.7%) have SOWs 18-22 5 sites (41.7%) have SOWs 23-25 5 sites (41.7%) have SOWs 26-30 5 sites (41.7%) have SOWs 31-40 2 sites (16.7%) have SOWs 40 or older
Q6	**How many street outreach workers are volunteer workers?**	2-3 sites (16.7%-25.0%) have volunteers (the third site noted they have 0 volunteer workers but do have teen outreach workers)
Q7	**How many street outreach workers are paid employees?**	All 12 sites have paid SOWs: 3 sites (25.0%) have 1 1 site (8.3%) has 2 (PARTTIME) 1 site (8.3%) has 3 1 site (8.3%) has 4 1 site (8.3%) has 5 2 sites (16.7%) have 6 1 site (8.3%) has 16 1 site (8.3%) has 25 1 site (8.3%) has 34
Q8	**How do you typically recruit street outreach workers?**	12 sites (100%) – Persons working in existing youth services programs 11 sites (91.7%) – Persons who care about youth 9 sites (75.0%) – Persons with prior street

		outreach experience 5 sites (41.7%) – Persons with clinical training 3 sites (25.0%) – Other: Combination of experiences and exposures Person that might have life experience Through our faith-based partnerships
Q9	**On average, how long does a street outreach worker remain in your program?**	1 site (8.3%) – less than 6 months 3 sites (25.0%) – 6 months to less than 1 year 1 site (8.3%) – 1 year to less than 2 years 7 sites (58.3%) – 2 years or more
Q10	**Why do most street outreach workers leave the program?**	2 of the 12 sites (16.7%) sites haven't had any workers leave Of the 10 that have: 8 sites (80.0%) – people have left to get another job 3 sites (30.0%) – people have left to go back to school 1 site (10.0%) – had a worker leave because of burn-out 0 sites have had workers leave to get married or have a child 3 sites (30.0%) – a worker left for "other" reasons: Part-time summer Personal issues Relapsed into old behavior patterns
Q11	**Are your street outreach workers typically gang affiliated before they come to you?**	N = 11 Only 1 site (9.1%) site said yes
Q12	**What percentage of your street outreach workers have been arrested prior to becoming involved as street outreach workers?**	7 sites (58.3%) have SOWs who had been arrested previously. Of these 7 sites: 3 sites (42.9%) – less than 10% 2 sites (28.6%) – 10% to less than 25% 1 site (14.3%) – 25% to less than 50% 0 sites – 50% to less than 75% 1 site (14.3%) – 75% or more
Q13	**How many hours do your street outreach workers work per week?**	6 sites (50.0%) – 40 hours or more 4 sites (33.3%) – 20 to less than 40 hours 2 sites (16.7%) – Fewer than 20 hours
Q14	**At what time of day are your street outreach workers typically in the field?**	5 sites (41.7%) indicated approx. a FT day starting in early afternoon (e.g., 12-8, 1-9); one of these also indicated each SOW is on call 8-3 (presumably 8pm-3am, but not indicated) 4 sites (33.3%) indicated approx. a half-day starting in late afternoon (e.g., 4-8, 5-10) 2 site (16.7%) indicated flexible or varies 1 site (8.3%) indicated 24/7 on call; days,

		nights, weekends, events, etc.
Q15	**Have you had to terminate any street outreach workers?**	5 sites (41.7%) have terminated a worker
Q16	**What were the reasons for terminating the outreach workers? N = 5**	2 sites (40%) – worker was arrested 2 sites (40%) – excessive absences or tardiness 2 sites (40%) – failure to follow program guidelines 2 sites (40%) – other Lack of personal growth, development Relapsed into old behavior
Q17	**What city agency or community-based organization employs your street outreach workers?**	8 sites (66.7%) indicate a community-based organization; 4 (33.3%) indicate a city agency: AWAKE, Northern Ed. Serv., South End C.C. Boys & Girls Club Boys & Girls Club and New England Farm Workers Coun CAEP City of Fall River – Youth Services City of Revere Framingham Coalition/Framingham Police My Turn, Inc. Roca School Department United Teen Equality Center (UTEC) YMCA and Treatment On Demand
Q18	**Is your Shannon collaborative planning to develop a street outreach program? (N=19)**	1 site (5.3%) – yes, within the next 6 months 1 site (5.3%) – yes, between 6 and 12 months 10 sites (52.6%) – yes, at some point in the future 7 sites (36.8%) – No

Comments (all direct quotes): 7 of 31 (22.6%) offered comments:

- Answer to question 18 [whether site is planning to develop SO program] would be unsure...with 10 communities involved in grant it would be difficult to figure how that would work and be effective.
- It's important to understand that the street outreach workers are on call 24/7. It's challenging and demanding and can often create turmoil. Street Outreach workers not only have to beware of the specific youth they encounter but of the load they are taking on themselves; which sometimes will cause them to relapse into old behaviors.
- Our Street Worker program has taken Straight Ahead's programming to another level, it has opened doors to youth who prior to this program would have no contact with our program. We are making an impact and this wouldn't be possible without the support of the Shannon Initiative. Lives are being saved and transformed.
- The Department teamed with ROCA, a Chelsea based youth organization in the late nineties and early two thousands on a street worker program until funding dryed up and ROCA closed it's storefront operation. The Department still partners with ROCA on an ad

hoc basis and participates in various initiatives with them such as developing a restorative justice model, youth referrals, and school based programming.

- This program started under our Weed & Seed grant. It is becoming more developed under Shannon.
- We (Somerville) don't have a streetworker program, but some of the MAPC regional communities do. We do, however, have youth workers who do some street outreach periodically, just not on a full time or regular basis.
- We do not plan to develop or implement a street outreach program in the near future due to the fact that most of our partnering agencies are very successful working off of referral based services. If at some point in time we begin to notice a decline in the overall success of the referral based service we would then review and maybe implement a street outreach program.